



News for Immediate Release
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DWR's 50th Anniversary, Wise Water Use Are Water Awareness Themes for 2006

SACRAMENTO - "Happy 50th Birthday, DWR" and "Use Water Wisely" are twin themes for the 2006 observance of May as Water Awareness Month in California.

The Department of Water Resources, created by the Legislature in 1956 when Goodwin J. Knight was governor, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with two major events in Sacramento on Wednesday, May 31.

An official public ceremony, with former DWR Directors invited to participate, is scheduled that morning on the West steps of the Capitol, starting at 11 a.m.

Speakers will review DWR's accomplishments, including its design, construction and operation of California's State Water Project (SWP), largest state-run multi-purpose water and power system in the United States.

A moment of silence will honor DWR employees who have died and pay special tribute to the late Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense under President Reagan, who as a member of the California Legislature from San Francisco in 1956 authored the bill creating the Department of Water Resources. Weinberger died in March at age 88.

After the Capitol ceremonies, a by-invitation social reception for friends, employees and retirees of the Department will follow at the restored Stanford Mansion, from 4 to 7 p.m. DWR alumni expected will include some of the engineers and staffers who helped build the SWP, acclaimed in 2001 as one of the greatest engineering achievements of the 20th Century by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

This May marks the 19th annual observance of Water Awareness Month, advocating the consistent theme "Use Water Wisely." Though California water supplies this spring are ample, thanks to a wet winter and high reservoir levels, prudent water use is a necessity to make maximum use of water supplies. Water Awareness Month developed in response to

California's statewide drought in 1987-1992.

Focus on Improving Flood Protection

This year, public attention is focusing on the need to improve California's flood protection, especially to upgrade and modernize aging levees in the Central Valley.

"In 2006, we celebrate DWR's half century of service by leading the drive to reinvest in our flood protection infrastructure, an effort that will help safeguard our vital water supplies," said DWR Director Lester Snow. As noted in DWR studies, Delta levee collapses could affect water supply exports in both the State Water Project and federal Central Valley Project.

The Governor's Strategic Growth Plan will invest \$35 billion over the next decade to strengthen the flood management system and provide safe and reliable water supplies for California. Through bonds, his flood protection plan will provide \$2.5 billion for flood management -- \$1 billion in 2006 and \$1.5 billion in 2010. Another \$3.5 billion will be generated from federal and local governments for a total 10-year investment of \$6 billion to strengthen levees and flood systems.

Already underway is a DWR-administered program, under the Governor's Emergency Declaration to repair severely eroded levees.

Operated by DWR, California's State Water Project (SWP) provides a supplemental water supply for more than 23 million Californians and irrigation water for about 750,000 acres of farmland, as well as flows to benefit fish, water quality and the environment.

DWR is a leading water resource management and planning agency in California. It operates flood management and dam safety programs for public protection and performs water planning and works on Delta ecosystem and levee projects, as coordinated through the California Bay-Delta Program.

DWR Regional WAM Events

DWR will mark Water Awareness Month with special events and activities at three venues at or near SWP facilities, in addition to the Capitol 50th anniversary events.

These WAM activities are scheduled at: the Edmonston Pumping Plant south of Bakersfield in Kern County on Thursday, May 11; in Oroville on Saturday, May 13, and at O'Neill Forebay near San Luis Reservoir in Merced County on Saturday, May 20.

The Edmonston event is an annual open house day at the pumping plant for students from selected schools in Kern County. Open by invitation only, it includes a free fishing event, water conservation and water safety briefings, and information on the State Water Project and the Edmonston Pumping Plant role in moving SWP water over the Tehachapi Mountains

into Southern California.

For more information, contact Allen Thompson, event coordinator, at (661) 858-5509.

The 17th annual Kids' Fishing Day near at O'Neill Forebay near San Luis Reservoir is open free of charge to young anglers, 15 and under. Fishing equipment and a lunch are provided. Starting at 8 a.m., on Saturday, May 20, this event features fishing with prizes for young anglers. A per-car fee is charged for admission to the State Parks recreation area where the annual fishing event is held.

Entrance to this event is off State Highway 152, eight miles west of Interstate 5 and about 15 miles west of Los Banos.

For more information about this event, contact DWR Guide Howard Berman at (209) 827-5353 or Jennifer Morgan in the local State Parks office at (209) 826-1196.

In Oroville, DWR employees will staff an activities booth with a fishing simulator in a downtown location, as part of the Oroville Feather Fiesta Days events on Saturday, May 13. Feather Fiesta Days this year take place May 4-14. Focus of the May 13 schedule will be at Parking Lot "A" at Montgomery, Meyers and Huntoon Streets, with the Oroville Municipal Auditorium as the backdrop.

For more information on the DWR booth, contact Rosemary Martin at the Lake Oroville Visitor Center at (530) 538-2219. For information on the entire Feather Fiesta Days celebration period contact the Oroville Area Chamber of Commerce at (530) 538-2542 or access the Chamber's Web site at www.orovillechamber.net.

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

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